



# Traces of hunting and the Royal Forests in Somerset place- names

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Museum of Somerset

East Coker mosaic,  
4<sup>th</sup> century



Approximate  
locations of the  
Royal Forests of  
Somerset



Wedmore *Wethmor* 678x88 (11<sup>th</sup>) possibly \***wæthe** + **mōr**, 'hunting marsh'

Wembdon *Wadmendune* DB probably \***wæthe-mann** + **dūn**, 'hill of the huntsmen'

Drogo de Montacute's estate at Donyatt records the only park noted in Somerset DB (Neroche area)

Hay Street (now in Ston Easton) was *Haia* DB (**ge**)**hæg** (Mendip area)

Alfward *Hunter* held Pendomer (not far from Selwood)

Siward *Falconer* held Dinnington DB (next to Allowenshay)

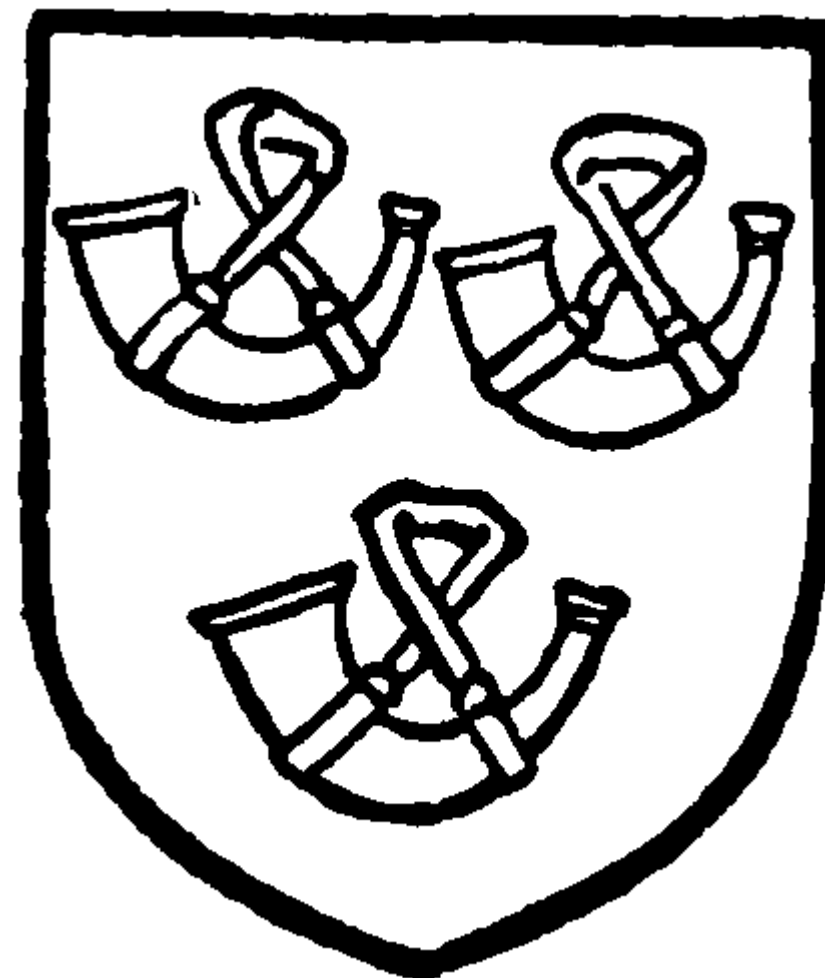
Ansketel *Parker* held Newton in North Petherton DB (later *Newton Forester*)

Doda *Forester* held land in Dulverton 1066 ExonDB; also *Stawe* (Nether Stowey) 1086 DB, estate later called Dodington; perhaps cf. Dadhays in Withypool (Exmoor)



# Three hunting bugles at Dodington

Churches Conservation Trust



Also found over the church porch and at the manor house

# Forest perambulations (late 13<sup>th</sup>) – names reflecting hunting

## Exmoor

(a stone called) *Deresmarke*; *Haukewelle* (Hawkwell); *Haukebrugge* (Hawkridge, forest court of Exmoor)

## Mendip

*Hyndemore*; *Hyndewell*

## North Petherton

*Deresscherde* (**sceard** replacing **geat**?); *Huntyngworth*, *Hunteworth*' (Huntworth); (lake called) *Huntyngeye*, *Huntingezcha*; *Huntham* (Huntham); *Nywton Forester* (North Newton)

## Neroche

*Foresta de Neracchiff*, *Nerecchuch*; *castrum de Rachich*, *Nerucchuch*; *Haukesbere*, *Hauekbere*

## Selwood

(park of) *Wicham* (Witham Park. Witham Friary was the first Carthusian monastery in England(1178) – roughly half of Selwood Royal Forest given up by Henry II – as penance for the murder of Thomas a Becket); *Hunteresweye*; (park of) *Forsese*, *Ferschet* (near Brewham)

# The Alfred Jewel – found in *Parkersfield*, Newton Park, North Petherton, in 1693

(ashmolean.org)



## Neroche Castle and Forest

*Nerechich* 1236, *Errechich* 1237, *Recciche* 1241, *Rechich* 1243, (forest of) *Rechiche* 1279, *Rechych* (chapel) 1317, *Nerechich* (forest) 1382, *Nerrechich* 1387, *Netherrechich* or *Nerechchiche* 1397, 1400-1404, *Reyche* 1461;

*Rachiche* 1244, *Neraccich* 1298, *Rachich* (chapel) 1311, *Rachiche* (forest) 1385, *Racche* (forest) 1435, 1462, *Rachich* or *Reyche* 1452, *Rache* 1633;

*Neroche* 1394, *Neroche* 1427, *Roche* (forest or chase) 1551, (forest of) *Roche* or *Neroche* 1580, (forest of) *Roch* 1625, (late disafforested) *Neroche* *alias* *Roche* 1636

Can it be OE **ræcc** + **wīc** 'farm, estate where hunting dogs are bred or kept'? Where was this farm?

Later with ME **ner** 'near' or **nether(e)** 'lower'? Perhaps with reference to the Forest?

Reinterpreted as Ofr, ME **roche** 'rock, cliff' when ME **rache** < OE **ræcc** was no longer understood ?

Cf. Rochford PNWo 69, *Raecessford* 11<sup>th</sup>, 'hunting-dog's ford'.

There is also the Somerset place-name **Rexworthy** (in Durleigh), *Racheworde*, *Rachedeworde* 1086, *Rachefouord*, *Racheworde*, *Rakesworth* n.d., *Rakesworthy* 1501, perhaps **ræcc** + **worth(ig)** 'hunting-dog farm'.

[Modern pronunciation and spelling influenced by **Lexworthy** nearby.]

Surname *Rakesworthy* from 1403, *Rexworthy* from 1633 at least.

The **rache** was a type of scent hound known from before the Norman Conquest. Hunting dogs were a highly prized English export in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century (Sawyer 1978).

Perhaps cf. ME **brache**, dim. **brachet** 'hunting-dog, female hound' ?



The Hunting Hound of Scotland called *RACHIE*, and in  
English a *HOUND*.



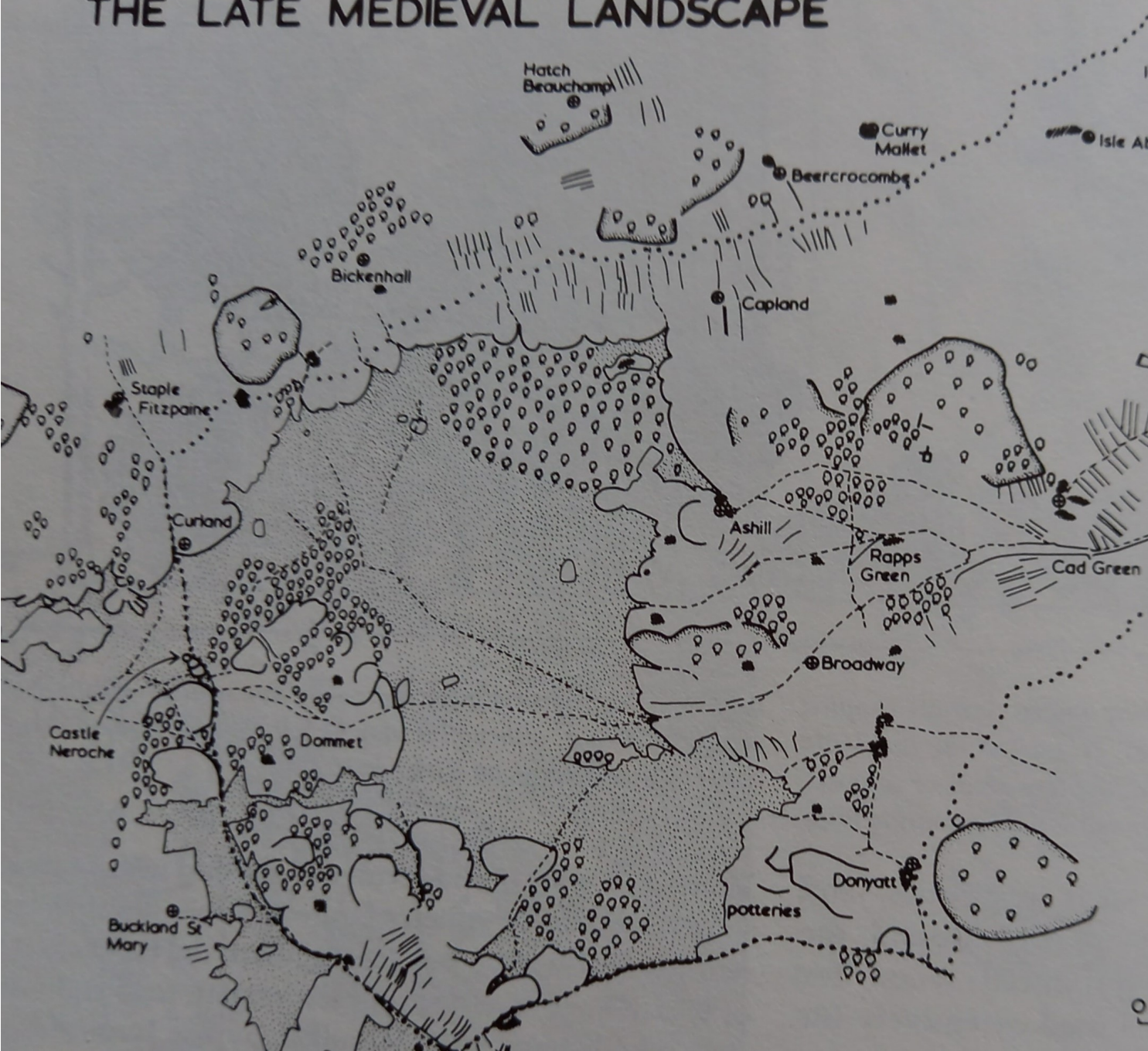
Gessner *Historiae Animalium*  
(Zurich 1554)

In “The Master of Game” (c1410) the dogs are classified as follows : raches, greyhounds, alaunts, spaynells, mastiff, kennettes, herriers, lymera.

The requirements of a rache were that “it should come of good parentage, be well grown of body, with wide nostrils, long snout, big lips hanging down, large eyes, red or black, great forehead and head, large ears well hanging down, strong breast and shoulders, great and round claws, foot a little low, small flanks, long sides, good chine-bone, back and thighs, tail great and high and crouping up on the back, but straight and crouping a little forward. A good greyhound “taketh or faileth”, but a rache goes on all day quest-ing and chiding”.

After c. 1530 the term 'rache' was hardly used in England, 'running hound' (tr. of *chien courant*), or mostly just 'hound', being preferred, but the term was still used for a while in Scotland.

# THE FOREST OF NEROCHE THE LATE MEDIEVAL LANDSCAPE



After Aston (1985)



<https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/>

Castle Neroche

Dommet *Duun Meten* 762 (early 14<sup>th</sup>)

Donyatt (on) *Duuneyete* 725 (13<sup>th</sup>)



## Poundisford Park, Pitminster

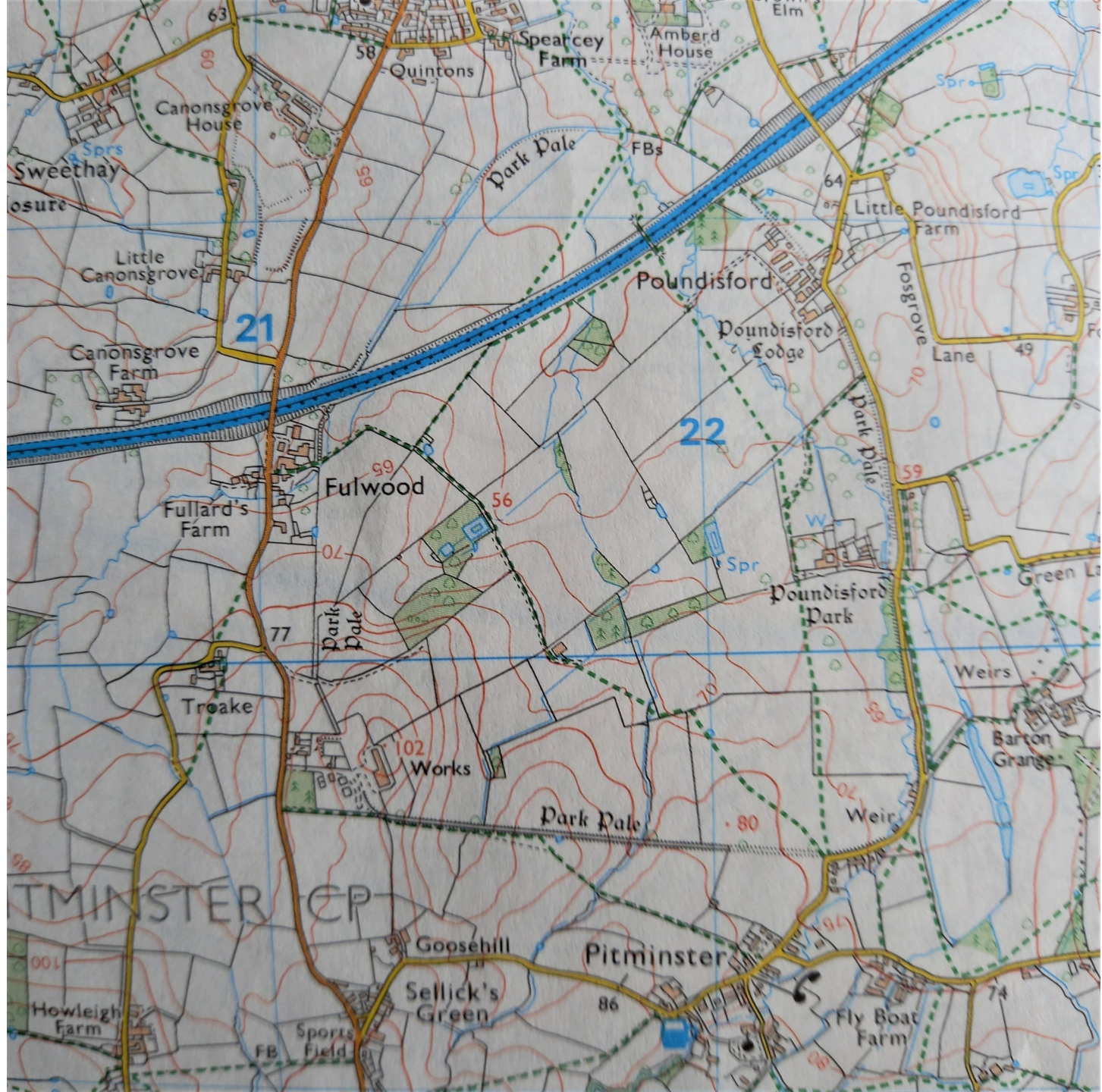
possibly of Saxon origin.

*Punderford* 1225,  
*Punderesford* 1243 DEPN,  
'the pinder's ford'.

Chief deer park of Taunton  
Castle.

From DB, Pitminster was one  
of Bishop of Winchester's  
estates in Taunton Deane.

1 pigman listed in ExonDB -  
could this be a misreading of  
*porcar'* for *parcar'* ?  
(cf. Liddiard 2003)



**hunta, huntena** ‘hunter(s)’ (or pers.n. *Hunta*):

*Hunteneswell* 1204,

Hunterwick *Huntenwyk* 1305,

Huntham (p) 1327,

Huntley (p) 1287,

Huntscott no early forms,

Huntspath *Huntenepath* (p) 1326,

Huntstile DB looks like pers.n. *Hūn* until *Huntstyghele by North Petherton* 1359,

Huntworth DB

(could be pers.n. *Hunta* but in N Petherton and DEPN suggests ‘**worth** of the huntsman’)

*Haia* DB **(ge)hæg** now Hay Street in Ston Easton

Allowenshay (in Kingstone) 1280 ME surn. *Aylwin* or pers.n. *Alwin*. Remains of park nearby.

Avishay (in Chaffcombe) 1316 NFr surn. *Avenel*. Lord of manor with right to hunt on Exmoor.

Buddlehay (in Wiveliscombe) 1327 (p). 'with a building or dwelling'.

Bullenshay (in Thurloxtan) 1548 John *Bole* or *Balle* was a free tenant of Thurloxtan.

[*Bychehey* (p) 1327 is probably a misreading of 'by the hay'....]

Clavelshay (in North Petherton) 1365 held by John *Clavyle*, NFr surname from Claville (Eure, Seine-Maritime) or OFr **clavel**, 'bolt, nail'.

Cothay (in Kittisford) 13<sup>th</sup> 'cottage enclosure'.

Hulkshay (in North Petherton) 1397 **hulc**, **huluc** 'shed, hut'

Staplehay (in Pitminster) no early forms. *Hayne* on *Staple Hill* 1809 ?

Sweethay (in Trull) *Swetehegh* (p) 1327. **swēt** 'sweet' or pers.n. *Swēta*, fem.pers.n. *Swēte*. (Grundy 1935 suggests this could have been the **haga** next to Dipford on the western boundary of Pitminster 938 (12<sup>th</sup>)).

*Yawl Hay* field name in Long Sutton (<**eald** + **(ge)hæg**) 'near the crossroads in Upton' (Grundy 1935)

[R. Jones 'Hunting for the meaning of the place-name Upton' (2012) in Jones & Semple *Sense of place in Anglo-Saxon England*]



Hornblotton (in Selwood) **horn-blāwere** + **tūn**. Costen suggests held by service to the king as trumpeter, perhaps in hunting.

Stocklinch Ottersey (not far from Neroche)

William *Ostricer* of Stocklinch = William de Seavington alias William *austricarius* 1188; Robert the *Hawker* 1207

Stoke Trister (in Selwood) family name from ME **triste**, **tristur** 'a hunting station'; denoting the man in charge of the hounds and preparations for the hunt (DEPN).

Alfward *Hunter* held Pendomer (not far from Selwood)

Siward *Falconer* held Dinnington DB (next to Allowenshay, at present centre of Kingstone)

Ansketel *Parker* held Newton in North Petherton DB

Doda *Forester* held land in Dulverton 1066 ExonDB; also *Stawe* (Nether Stowey) 1086 DB, later called Dodington; perhaps cf. Dadhays in Withypool

### **Somerset Lay Subsidy 1327**

*Fauconner* (in Cheddar)

*Le Blowar* x 3

*le Fogheler* x 4

*le Forester* x 6

*le Hunte* x 6

*le Parker* x 10 (including *Parcario* at Barrow (Gurney, perhaps the ancestor of the park at Barrow Court)

*atte Lupeyate* (and variant spellings) approximately 20 examples, none easily identifiable with surviving place-names.



Bayeux Tapestry

**Thank you!**

Any questions?